

This story was given to me by Mrs. M. Fernie, she is a sister to the man who wrote this record, to be passed on to the future generation
MR CHRIS THOMPSON (~~see~~ note at end) *Lucy Anderson 1971*

This is a record of the facts I am setting out to write, hoping that the perusal of same may not only interest my children and grandchildren, but possibly some day my great grandchildren.

This record centres mainly in or about the now almost forgotten Nor-West Coastal port of Cossack, at one time the most important of the North West Coastal townships, being the home port for the pearling fleet long before the hub of the industry shifted further north to Broome. In addition to being the pearling base, Cossack was the port for the largest of the North West inland towns of that time, namely Roebourne, situated about 10 miles inland from the port, and in its time Roebourne was the hub supply centre for many sheep and cattle stations, and copper and gold mining centres as far away as Marble Bar in the north, and beyond the Fortescue to the south.

My father (your grandfather and great grandfather) was born at Gateshead (near Newcastle on Tyne) England about the year 1848, served his apprenticeship to the shipwrighting trade at Newcastle on Tyne, and at the age of 21, went to America, but not finding things to his liking he came to Western Australia. He worked at his trade in Fremantle for some time with a shipbuilder (I think it was Chamberlains), who was kept busy building luggers for the North West pearling fleet. He decided to try his luck at the pearling, and built a boat for himself, sailed it to Cossack (a little more than 1,000 miles).

However he found that work at his trade was so plentiful, and well paid, that he disposed of his boat, and never entered the pearling industry. I have no record of the date, but it must have been between the years 1872 and 1876 that my father sailed north. By the way, it might be of interest to some of you that your great grandfather was a well set up man of 6' in his bare feet, never developed any surplus fat, and until he was over 50 always wore a "bushy" beard, and after that reduced to a well trimmed "goatee".

My mother was a direct opposite to my father, and would have had to "crib" a bit by stretching on her toes to reach 5'. Her coming to Australia may interest you more than a little.

Mother was born somewhere around London, and was about 4 or 5 years younger than father, and when you read of the manner of her coming to Australia, and the nature of that same Australia at that time (about 1878) and compare with the conditions of the present day for the comfort and well being of our migrants, you may well ask what the latter have to complain about.

As stated before I have no exact record of the year, but working back from the birth date of my eldest brother it must have been about 1878 that my mother arrived off the port of Cossack in a sailing ship after a long voyage from England. The ship had come to load a return cargo of wool.

My mother was accompanied by her father, brother, and two younger sisters, and was engaged as governess to the children on Croydon station which at that time I am given to understand was one of the largest and best stations out from Roebourne. She learned to ride a horse (side saddle) and with the other folks often rode into Roebourne and Cossack to attend dances, etc., where she met my father, and married about the year 1879. One of the jokes she often told about her riding days, was that of the days of courting when she had to ride to Cossack to see her fiance, as he had no horse, and how on one such visit the saddle girth broke, the saddle slipped off with her still on it. The horse continued without her to Cossack, and she sat on the saddle until my father came looking for her, and her friends would have it that she did it on purpose.

Now that you have been told a little about my parents, perhaps it would not come amiss to tell you a little about your uncles and aunties. Well, Harry was my eldest brother and was killed in World War I; Andrew (Andy) was the next and he is at present living in Subiaco, having retired from the position of Post Master after a service of 50 years. The next born was myself, and at the age of 71 last birthday, have been retired for more than 11 years, and so far have managed without a pension. After myself came Janet, she is living at Leederville; then there is your Aunt Maggie, living at Carmel near Pickering Brook, then Jessie, she lives at Subiaco; then Ada who is living in Sydney, N.S.W. Then the youngest boy Sydney, was born in 1896 and was killed in World War I at Parchendale in France on the day so many A.I.F. men were sent to practically certain death. He was just 21.

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You will gather by the foregoing that our family was 4 boys and 4 girls all born at Cossack of English parents. Now that you know a bit about your ancestors, I will endeavour to relate some of the events of my younger days so that you can draw your own comparisons.

Perhaps I had better give you an outline of the layout of Cossack.

Cossack township was built on the north bank of a tidal creek, the width of which was almost $\frac{1}{4}$ mile at the township site. The sea flowed in and out of the creek twice in 24 hours, and at spring tides would have a rise and fall of 18 feet, and sometimes more. By this is meant that twice in 24 hours the water at the concrete wharf (sometimes called a jetty) would be 18' deep, and twice in 24 hours it would recede to such an extent that we could walk across the creek on almost dry ground.

The township consisted in the good times of about 60 dwellings and buildings for the white population, and about 50 in china town, as it was known. But when the pearling fleet was laid up in the creek for 3 or 4 months each year, the population of china town was mostly Malay and Japanese who greatly outnumbered the Chinese.

It maybe of interest that I tell you something at this stage of the pearling fleet.

I cannot accurately recall the number of luggers and schooners in the pearling fleet working with Cossack as headquarters for many years, but it must have been somewhere between 60 or 100 luggers and almost 6 or 8 schooners (the schooner was the motor ship acting as store and provider to a number of luggers).

It was a grand sight to watch the luggers arriving each day at "lay up" time and to try to forecast where they would drop anchor, then the crews coming ashore to swell the population, and after that the busy time for my father would start, and the grand times we would have as lads, sometimes helping by going aboard luggers to have their decks recaulked, and helping to roll the cakum for the purpose (cakum was a tar smelling fibre which had to be "teased" to a fluff and then rolled into long lengths about $\frac{3}{4}$ inch in diameter and then rolled up into a ball like the modern ball of wool).

Then there were the boats which were laid up on the beach to have the lower portion of their hulls re-coppered, with sheets of copper, and many other jobs. Some needed new masts which had to be hewn round and smooth, with a carpenter's adze wielded by my father, between his feet whilst standing on the square span of imported oregon pine.

My greatest thrill however was when I was allowed to go aboard the big schooners to help; and to see some of the wonderful shells and coral which had been collected from the ocean beds.

Also whilst the fleet was in port the annual regatta was held in Cossack Creek. Lugger races out to sea and back around the Islands; yacht races which included cutters, sloops, dinghies and anything with a sail; but I think the most popular event was the 4 and 8 oar races with opposing crews from the ships and township the boats being ships "gigs" (a long narrow dinghy) lifeboats, etc. Running races, jumping, swimming and also Japanese wrestling events were held.

I omitted to mention another important section of our small township, that was, the native population. As near as I can recall they would number about 100 or possibly more and they lived mainly all together in their rough, but snug "Mia Mia's" about $\frac{1}{4}$ mile from the white township. Some lived near the homes for which they worked, in their Mia Mia's built in amongst the "coast" spinifex and usually kept a fire going all night, right in front of the opening and sometimes if the weather was wet or cold they would have the fire inside the Mia Mia and the smoke did not seem to worry them.

Nearly every white household had one to three natives working for them, and most of our family were nursed by them, being looked after in, and about their Mia Mia, during the day and so far as I can recall we never had any trouble with them and whilst the Mia Mia looked rough from the outside it was always kept clean inside (except for the smoke at times.) The native women usually did the laundry washing at the home and the men looked after stables and horses, cut firewood, etc. They did not have much use for money in those days and were paid 2/- per week with keep and tobacco. They were not allowed intoxicating liquor, but some people used to make "sugar beer" which was somewhat the same as our present day "hop beer". The whole of the native wages was spent on this sugar beer at 3d. a small billy can.

I should leave the recording of Blows and their aftermath; but I feel I cannot do so, without relating an incident which came near tragedy for two people; but was afterwards treated as a joke by all, including Mr. & Mrs. Harry Wilson, the two people most concerned.

When the blow came on they were living in a good substantial house, within a hundred yards or so of our new school, where they knew the schoolmaster, Mr. Niebel would be sheltering.

At the height of the storm their house began to go from over them, so they decided to try and reach the school. Linking arms they started out, but no sooner had they stepped out into the storm, than they were torn apart by the wind, and did not see or hear anything of each other until it was all over, each believed the other dead; but they survived by hanging on with their hands, behind clumps of coastal spinifex. It must have been a dreadful nightmare with iron flying, rain and wind and never knowing the moment they might be swept into the marsh.

It might be as well to explain that coastal "spinifex" is not sharp and prickly like the well known clumps farther inland.

Let us leave the "Blows" and turn again to our aborigines. Some of you may recall an account appearing in our local press not so long ago of the escapades of a native called Pidgeon, who whilst a tracker for the police further south than Cossack, turned murderer and then led other outlaws in murder and cattle spearing.

Pidgeon was at large for a long while and I well recall the occasion we had a dreadful scare at Cossack, where it was reported that he had been traced to the mangroves near the township, trouble was expected, and it was only when after an interval, it was reported that he or his tracks had been sighted back near his original hideout, that the townspeople relaxed.

The native prisoners constructed all the roads in and out of Cossack and a good solid job they made. Last year whilst on a visit to Cossack these same roads were still being used and no doubt the foundations laid by these prisoners were still under the gravel surface.

The prisoners worked in gangs all chained in pairs, that is to say two were joined by about 15 or 20 foot of light steel chain, the ends passed round their necks as a collar, encased in leather, they wore no clothes other than half a dark blanket around the waist like a short skirt. At night the chains were secured to a ringbolt in the prison floor.

Earlier in my narrative I have referred to the water supply and its scarcity and now as an incident comes to my recollection which at the time of its occurrence was considered rather serious.

For many years Cossack boasted one well only, several had been tried and brackish or salt water had resulted, until it was discovered that fresh water was procurable, provided that the deepening of the well was not proceeded with beyond a foot or so after reaching water level, otherwise they broke through to salt.

This particular well from which all drew supplies was about 60 feet deep, with a heavy ships pump at the top, worked by hand.

After a dry season the supply would be exhausted, after a number had drawn from the well and people had to wait for it to seep in again.

On one occasion an old Chinaman arrived toward evening and found he could not get a supply per medium of the pump, so he decided to descend the well and bail a supply from the bottom. He got down alright, but could not get out again and was discovered there next morning when the first came for supplies. Well after that, do you think you would fancy using that water.

That days supply had to be pumped away to waste, and then, the well cleaned out. After that a lock was placed on the trap door.

Much later my father and another man (Harry Edney) took a contract to dig in another spot a little nearer the township. I well recall its progress as I had the job each day to take a billy of tea with fresh scones after school, and was allowed to descend the well as progress was made. Good water was found and they were careful not to go through to the salt which they knew from past experience was very close below the fresh.

Well, after about 20 minutes lull, the blow came back from the opposite direction and whereas the wind and water from the first direction had given our place a bit of a lean back on its stumps, this return wind pushed it back upright again, and also lifted the big schooner (whilst there was no water under her) and leaned her back in the opposite direction.

After this experience it was decided that when the next blow threatened we would seek shelter on higher ground and we did. This one was in the year 1898. We moved to a neighbour's place at the foot of "Nanny Goat" hill, not far from our own place.

The owner of the house (a large house with detached billiard room) was a merchant storekeeper named Meagher and he had just previously been married down south and had unpacked a very valuable collection of wedding presents, which were set out on the billiard table, with a grand piano in the corner of the room.

We were given the use of this room, but were not long in it before the roof lifted and sailed away; it had not been fastened down with the usual wire cable.

Fortunately the room was sheltered at the lea of the main building and we were able to reach the back door of the larger place; which proved very fortunate for Mr. Meagher and his bride. Mr. Meagher had rather underestimated the power of these "Blows" and had not taken the precaution to bolster up the inside of large windows. When my father got in he found Mr. Meagher in a bad state of mind, as the main window was bulging in (despite a heavy wooden shutter on the outside). The glass had all cracked and the whole lot threatened to give way at any moment. At once the bed mattress was placed against the inside of the window, followed by the iron bedstead mattress and the whole lot held by human pressure until the "lull" came and then they proceeded to bolster up the opposite windows whilst the going was good. Next morning we found that a fair sized sailing boat had been deposited in Mr. & Mrs. Meagher's front garden.

The damage done by these two blows would be unbelievable unless seen. A number of luggers were a mile and more inland from the Mangrove Creeks, many had cut away their masts to avoid capsize at anchorages, some sank at anchor, (2 men drowned) beside the schooner and lighter near our place, another was high and dry on the eastern side of Cossack Jetty, the lighter "Croydon" had dragged away from "deep hole" Jetty and was high up on the mainland, the lighter "Beagle" had broken from her moorings and anchor at Cossack concrete Jetty, knocked the whole of one corner off and stove a large hole near forward end, then ended up about 50 yards away on top of the rocks at the western end of the jetty, with her stern resting higher up again, on the place where the tram platform had been, the railway station had gone altogether. It would need many pages to describe the whole of the havoc, but I might mention that included in the two blows, we lost two horses, 1 cow (these were blown across the marshes and no doubt eventually out to sea), 7 goats, about 100 head of poultry and 30 pigeons. One pigeon was saved. I found him when searching the high water mark debris long way back from the house, quite comfortable inside his box cote, which was buried under piles of refuse.

After this last blow we found many tins of ships stores, with the label washed off, but we never could know whether our lunch would consist of sausages, corned beef, or mutton, until the tin was opened. These were all discovered by raking over the debris at storm high water mark which was about 200 yards back of our house.

Many wrecks and drowning tragedies came to light after the blows; but the worst I can recall was that of the schooner "Ann" with the loss of the Captain owner (Captain Erickson) his wife, two children (both whom we had played with at Cossack) and his coloured crew, and also a Mr. Joe Green from Cossack who had tied his small lugger to the stern of the "Ann" and joined the family in their cabin for safety. Captain Erickson had anchored in sheltered water at a place well known on the coast as the "Flying Foam", but from investigations made after the storm it appeared that not enough anchor chain was passed out, and the vessel dragged under; all were under cover below decks, except one Malay man, this man had been picked up by Joe Green from an island where he had been marooned for some time; when the "Ann" went down he climbed the rigging of the mast and was the only survivor.

My father, with an assistant, brought all the drowned into Cossack and they were put to rest in Cossack cemetery and I doubt if there are a dozen people living today who would remember the sad tragedy which cast a gloom over the port for a long time afterward.

Certainly the only reason or desire I could conjure up for my starting to smoke when I did was that I just felt I had to do the same as my mates in the Army, always previously I had been too busy and occupied with other pursuits. I know some of you who read this will scoff, but pause a moment and ask yourself the question, calmly.

Up to the present I have not given an account of a phase of North West life which in those days played more than a small part in the community. I refer to what we knew as the dreaded "Willy Willy" or "Blow" and is now referred to by our weather people as a "cyclone".

No radio or long distance weather reports were available in the days I am writing of, and none could tell whether or not the centre, or the fringe of the Blow could be expected to hit the township or pass by, well out to sea.

When buildings were erected, the possibility of a "Blow" was provided for. Roofs were anchored down by passing a double line of ships wire rigging over the top and the four ends buried well underground attached to heavy iron anchor pieces; strong wooden shutters were hinged on the outside of all windows, and let down over them when a blow threatened.

I cannot personally recall any blow earlier than that which occurred in 1892; but I had often heard before and since of earlier blows which had created havoc at Cossack and Roebourne.

I have a vivid recollection of the blow of 1892 and another in 1898. Two years previous to the 1892 upheaval, my Father had built a new house of a design and strength he considered necessary to meet all conditions and emergencies likely to arise. The main road separated our block frontage from the sea which at high tide would gently lap the other side of the road and gave us a lovely outlook.

The foundations of the house were on heavy bridge piles standing over 4ft. above the level of the road surface, squarely built with 2" lean-to rooms on the back corners and a verandah surrounding the whole; and large kitchen etc. at the rear. The roof was flat and surrounded by an ornamental railing with fancy cut out pickets filling in. This roof was designed for summer nights where we all slept and where we entertained neighbours clear of the mosquitos and sandflies which were a menace.

For a day or two the weather seemed to be working up for a "blow" and all preparations were made to meet it, luggers moved further up under the shelter of the long Mangrove Island which is a feature of Cossack Creek. The steam lighter "Croydon" moved across to deep hole jetty on the far side of the creek and the steam lighter "Beagle" put out extra anchors whilst remaining alongside Cossack Jetty and some of the large pearlers schooners left the creek for the sheltered inlets and islands along the coast.

Our livestock at the time consisted of about four goats, one horse and a number of chooks and my loft of pigeons.

The storm came to its worst near midnight. Despite the fact that the tides were at "neap", that is to say they would not rise or fall beyond about half the spring tide levels, the force of the blow was such that the water rose over the main road and higher still, until it was lapping above the floor boards of our house. Our goats had earlier taken shelter under the house and their bleats of terror could be heard as the water rose, nothing could be done to save them, as even though efforts were made to coax them to the trap door, inside the house, they would not leave the corner to which they had retreated.

Our Father and Mother, not knowing how much higher the water would rise, before the expected lull would come, contemplated trying to get us out by using ropes but the wind ceased. (In the centre of the proper "Blow" this always happens and remains a calm lull in the storm for about 20 minutes.) the water receded even faster than it had risen. My father opened the back door to get an idea of what had happened. He reported a flat bottom lighter (named the Cossack), was high and dry where our stables used to be, we found later that she had struck and broken our corner verandah post and then swung round and probably had something to do with one of the "lean-to" rooms being demolished, and the wind had demolished that on the other corner.

A large schooner which had not run out of the creek early for shelter, but had depended on her anchors holding, was just over the road right in front of our house, and had only been prevented from coming over and demolishing us and our house by the solidly constructed road.

This white variety is very rare and may only be a sport from the red; but if it is any satisfaction to my children and grandchildren they can claim I think that the earliest find was made by myself and another lad named Hubert Hall when riding to round up a cow that had wandered across the marsh to the Rocky Gully country near the road to Roebourne. I recall that the ladies at Cossack readily gave me 1/- for each bloom to wear in their dresses at dances.

Previously I have mentioned that Cossack was built on a tidal creek, and so that you might understand better some of the events related herein, I will try to give further details of this natural protected harbour.

The entrance to the creek was about one mile from the Cossack wharf or jetty. Across this entrance was a sand covered rocky bar and after a number of testings, it had been decided that nothing could be done about removing it and deepening the entrance, with the means available in those days. The steamers trading from the south and also from Singapore, could not enter the creek with safety so they always anchored beyond Jarman Island which was also at the entrance to the creek but half a mile or so beyond the rocky sand bar. This meant that steamers had to anchor at least 3 miles from Cossack township and all cargo to and from had to be carried by lighter. The lighters used in the earlier period were flat bottomed wooden vessels but during the 90's, two steel steam lighters were introduced, one owned by each shipping company trading to the port. Passengers were catered for by several small sailing vessels and also a lifeboat manned by six natives rowing and steered by a white man.

Most of us lads at Cossack were well used to the water and had no fear of it, being in the habit of sailing and swimming in all parts of the fast flowing creek which travelled several miles inland after being split up into a number of mangrove bordered creeks. Only one occasion can I recall, where we came close to tragedy. A Sunday afternoon it was, when wearing our nicely laundered white twill or light grey Assam suits, five of us set out in a 12 foot dinghy to row over to Jarman Island. All went well until we were crossing the rocky sand bar previously referred to. The tide was not high and in consequence the shallow depth resulted in rough water crossing that bar. The boat shipped a large wave, tipped most of us out and we had to hang on to the gunwale, empty the boat, and get across before the next one got us. We did not turn back, but duly paid our visit to the lighthouse. By the way, I might mention that asbestos was being mined from this same Jarman Island at one stage and so far as I know it was the first discovery of asbestos up north and probably in the State.

I do not recall recording the somewhat unusual method of water transport for household and shipping use adopted at Cossack.

Hogshead or casks were fitted with a spindle at each end, to which a horse was attached by a pair of trace chains hooked to the spindles. Usually two casks were attached to each other, filled with water and the horse dragged both at the one time, along a sand track, which soon became a permanent ribbon like track, shaped and hardened by the rolling of the barrels of water. The main well was at the western extremity of the town and the track extended the whole length of the white township and on to Chinatown. Whilst water was plentiful after good season's rains, the price charged was 1/- per barrel, but after a drought year or two, the cost went up as sometimes we had to wait for the water to seep back into the well after it had been drawn on for a cask or two. My father ran a water delivery service at one stage of my life at Cossack and usually we had a native filling and delivering the orders whilst I accompanied him to collect payment from the customers. In connection with this delivery I have never forgotten an incident that may not be to my credit, but at the same time taught me a lesson I never forgot.

We were delivering to Chinatown and in addition to the native driver I had a companion named Harry Somerville with me. Japanese women sitting on the floor at the house we were delivering to, made us all a cigarette. Harry and I were so occupied smoking and watching out that we did not burn our fingers or noses, that we did not hear Father come round the corner. The driving whip was handy and we both got it about our buttocks. I do not recall ever smoking again until I was over 30 years of age and discontinued it completely after about 3 years trial. One definite conclusion I arrived at was the fallacy of an oft repeated claim made by smokers, that they smoked because it soothed the nerves.

I did my best to confirm this belief, and eventually came to the conclusion that smokers only deluded themselves into believing in its soothing qualities; and actually what happened is that the handling and care of the cigarette, necessary whilst smoking, does not permit the brain giving attention to anything else, in the same way as say the act of eating ones melas requires all ones attention.

Another rather tragic incident occurred at Cossack round about this period. A tall, well built American Negro, who was well known for his aggressive manner and quarrelsome ways had a hand blown off when dynamiting fish in Cossack Creek and I well remember the dreadful howls of pain and fright I heard about breakfast time one morning later, and on investigation amongst the mangroves almost in front of our house, Wilson was found with the second hand blown off.

Whilst referring to incidents connected with the Chinatown population, it would not come amiss to relate one that could have had serious consequences about the time I was 15 years old. I was the youngest of a band of young chaps (including also my two elder brothers) who had formed what we were pleased to call a "musical band", consisting so far as I recall of an accordeon, tin whistle, triangle, two mouth organs, and yours truly playing the kettledrum, this last being thin leather stretched tightly over a small wooden casket. Christmas Eve, after dark we paraded around the township playing Christmas Carols, as we were pleased to call them, but actually popular tunes of that time. In due course about six bottles of beer had been presented to the party. The beer was placed in a sugar bag and entrusted to my brother Andy, and we proceeded to Chinatown to play. At Chinatown the bag and contents were placed in a narrow passage between two buildings whilst we played a few tunes on the opposite side of the street where lived a number of Malays. Later it was found that the bag of beer had disappeared and a couple of our older companions who had apparently had a few too many drinks before we had reached this point, accused the Malays. Argument ensued and a fight was imminent when the Malays drew knives. We were fortunate in having as one of our party, the college educated son of a Jamaican or American Negro pearler, who could speak the Malayan language and he managed to pacify the Malays whilst the members of our party who did not drink, took our tipsy friends off. The beer was never found.

So far I have omitted to touch on the mode of transport other than the Cossack/Roebourne tram service of that day.

For all light work, it was horse riding or horse buggy and a few larger carriages with two or more horses, but for heavy transport such as wool, copper ore, etc., bullock teams were the principal means, along with a few horse teams, and I recall the time when a boat load of camels was landed at Cossack for work further north and inland. Horses that are not used to camels can smell them a long way off and they do not like them. On the occasion of this shipment arriving, every loose horse in the district bolted into the hills and the few that were left could not be induced to work until the camels had gone.

I have at times seen articles printed in our present day press to the effect that motor cars first came onto our roads early in the 1900s, but this cannot be correct, as I left the north in 1901, and prior to leaving, a motor car was owned and driven at Cossack by the local hotel keeper's daughter. It did smoke from the rear, and smell, yes it did.

Also I recall when the two wheel bicycles began to take the place of the old penny farthing. Every growing lad over 12 years and every young man up to 25 soon had a bicycle sent up from south and soon we used them for week-end hunting trips over the clay pen country, I have a photo before me now of a number of us, with a kangaroo, which we had run to earth, with the help of a kangaroo dog and a couple of fox terriers, and several times we have had to limp home with the help of each other after a smash into the tough spinifex.

A cycling incident of the north I might be forgiven mention of, will not I hope seeming to crow over the fallen; was when a newcomer arrived from the south, where he had been a champion and successful rider in cycle events. He brought with him his racing machine and silk racing jacket with sash inscribed on it the word "Champion". A big sports meeting was held on the grounds over on the opposite bank of the Harding River at Roebourne. The champion was a contender, looking splendid in his silk blouse and ribbon, as also was brother Andy in shirt sleeves and riding a heavy roadster cycle. To the surprise of all, your Uncle Andy beat the champ every time. Nor-West stamina told. However, the beaten chap was a nice chap and did not bear any ill will. He was also a popular singer of comic songs and he was good at it.

You have all heard of, and probably seen the wildflower called the Sturt Pea, (I have a fine plant in my front garden at this moment with over 30 flowers out) this flower grew very prolific about 5 miles out of Cossack, and also along the coast; but the only name we knew it by was "The Red Dragon". You also may have seen recent mention of an isolated instance where someone has come across a "white" Sturt Pea.

looking back he spotted Jacky running between the rails, but instead of stopping he whipped the horse into a gallop and I think we were all ready to cry in company with poor Jacky whom we felt was being left behind to the company of the kangaroos and snakes. However, after a mile or so he pulled up to rest the horse and wait for Jacky; but we never did it again.

Well, we carried on with our three hour trip to and from school per tram for about $1\frac{1}{2}$ years, and I understand it was due to a very sad happening that the building of a new school house was hurried forward. We always had about $\frac{3}{4}$ to 1 hour wait after school before the tram started back from Roebourne, and we generally played about the deep pools amongst the rocks in the Harding River. One day after we left, a sister and brother from Roebourne were drowned at the spot. The new school at Cossack was built of local stone, but I attended for a few months only and was then told that I could not come back after the Christmas break as I was in the 6th standard and they did not teach any higher. That would be in the year 1897 and I was then 12 years old. Maybe I will tell you what I did, before the close of this narrative.

In the early 90's a gold rush occurred and as Cossack was the nearest port of call for all steamers from the south, a very busy time set in, every steamer was crowded with men and my parents seized the opportunity to open a boarding house in order to cater for the arrivals who had to wait several weeks for transport inland and to get their equipment together. The boarding house was about 500 yards along the street from our house; a Chinese or sometimes Japanese cook was employed as cook and my Mother, with my assistance, did the setting and waiting on table, which was at least 30 feet in length running the length of a cool lean-to attachment at the rear of the sleeping quarters. I am never likely to forget the sight of that table lined the full length and down both sides and the good natured calls and knife and fork tunes those men played if we were a bit slow. They were a fine good natured lot and many good musical instrument players passed through that place; (and Brian, that is where I learned to play draughts, so you will now understand why you have found me hard to beat.)

Some of you may have heard at some time or other of the men who went off to the goldfields pushing a wheelbarrow, containing all his equipment. This actually happened from our boarding house at Cossack. I can visualise in my mind a picture of that man to this day, he was a big strong chap and I think he was a Swede; but I cannot recall his name.

Another man of note I recall was Syd Hadley, at that time I remember him best was when he came to stay at the boarding house after he had been rescued from a long stay with wild natives who had befriended him when he was shipwrecked. Prior to this mishap he had been just about the wildest and best swearer in the north. But what a change, he stayed with us for a while; he had allowed his hair to grow long, below his shoulders, and vowed not to have it cut until he had stoned for his lurid past. He kept that vow and for many years afterwards was head of the mission to natives on a well known island way up north.

I could recall many other interesting occurrences in connection with that boarding establishment; but I will close its history with one more.

I have before mentioned the influx of Malay and Japanese population during the pearlers "lau up" period. It so happened on one such occasion that a number of Malays ran amuk in Chinatown, and went from house to house shooting through the flimsy walls, unfortunately we were without a cook next day; a bullet had killed our Japanese cook, who had been quietly sitting having a smoke behind one of the walls. A somewhat similar episode occurred a year or so before our cook's sad end. It was the practice of the Chinese each year to celebrate their Christmas with a procession at Cossack or Roebourne. The main feature was a huge dragon, made up of one man enveloped under the large dragon's head and attached to the head a long dragon's body made of cloth material, under which walked about 15 or 20 men, each forming a hump of the dragon. It looked very realistic and I have never seen as good a performance since.

However, the Malays again took a hand, a Chinese storekeeper was head of this procession and the celebrations were being held at Roebourne Chinatown. The Malays started firing with revolvers and seriously wounded our Chinese storekeeper who came from Cossack, where he ran a store next door to our boarding house. In those days a licence to carry firearms was not necessary; in fact even we boys were familiar with their use, but we knew their danger and must have handled them with a little more care than appears to be the practice at the present period.

and that was the originals of the Withnell family and it surprises me, and I often wonder why, that a memorial was not set up in their memory. Monuments and memorials have been set up to the memory of many a less deserving pioneer. Our parents used to tell us of the landing of the first white woman (Mrs. Withnell) and how the family, after landing at Cossack, went in search of water and from Mt. Welcome (which received its name from this episode) they sighted the Harding River and their main trouble was solved. Possibly you will understand the magnitude of the water problem after you read the later portion of this narrative.

To give you some idea of the early date and undeveloped period of the Withnell's leaving of civilisation, I may be forgiven for repeating a joke which was often passed round in my time, and received with typical Nor-west good humour; it was said that when the original Withnell's eldest son came south to Fremantle, for the first time, he had never seen a railway train, and before he could be persuaded to board one at fremantle, it was necessary to blindfold and back him into the carriage. Again I say a memorial should be erected to their grit and pioneering spirit.

In case my narrative so far has been somewhat on the historic side, I will turn with a few lines to episodes that may interest my younger grandchildren. Well, since schools opened up this year (1956) I have been driving my grandchild, Maree, to and from school about 1½ miles each way and it has often set me thinking of the school days of my youth.

My earliest schooling was in a well built modern hall near the eastern boundary of the white township of Cossack, and we had one teacher who looked after all classes. For the greater part of my education we had a female teacher, or as we termed her a "lady" teacher, and the inspector came up and examined us once every year, only twice was I under a male teacher and for short periods only, a Mr. Casey and later Mr. Niebel.

I have never forgotten what we considered at the time to be a very serious but rather funny happening. The Inspector had arrived from the south and we all turned up after an extra rubbing of hands and face with soap and water and clean clothes for the occasion, and with the fear of the devil as it were in our hearts of the ordeal ahead of us. But strange to say our teacher did not arrive and we were rather glad as we considered this would cancel any inspection; but we were wrong, that inspector went right on with the game. The lady teacher turned up when the day was half over and explained that she and a friend had attended a dance at Roebourne the night before, and on the way home per horse and buggy had had a breakdown. The facts came out later that they had imbibed rather too freely and had fallen asleep, their horse not being able to open the half way commonage gates, had also gone to sleep and no one had wakened until after daylight.

Cossack was in the centre of a big Willy Willy (you now hear of it as a cyclone) in the year 1892 (I am fairly certain it was 1892, if not it would be 1893) about which I may give you more detail later.

In addition to plenty more damage our school was completely blown down. We jumped for joy, there was no other building available for a school, and I think in those days every boy and girl detested school, as it was all reading, writing and arithmetic, with an occasional singing lesson thrown in, and this lesson we looked forward to as a good break. But in quick time we were disallusioned, we were put on the tram each day and taken to Roebourne, a trip of about 11 miles. Now this tram was nothing like a tram as you know it. The only resemblance to your tram is that it ran on rails, but instead of electricity, it was drawn by horse. One tram would start from Roebourne and the other from Cossack, they would meet half way, change horses and drivers and that was done twice daily and took 1½ hours to do the trip. The seats in the tram ran from front to back and the passenger sat back to back facing outwards, long cushions were on the seats, and to these cushions hangs a tale, or what we considered at that time a grand joke.

I am afraid we got up to all the mischief on the journey back and forward and we must have been a terrific worry to our drivers. But he got his own back one day. One of our tricks was to have some of us sit tight on the lovely velvet cushion, whilst one or two held onto the cushion with one hand and leaned out to pick flowers with the other. This arrangement was alright so long as the sitters sat tight; but one day we thought we would play a joke on a lad named Jacky Clark (I wonder what has become of him since) and as he leaned out to pluck a special flower we all jumped up, Jacky went out, cushion and all. We called to the driver and on

This brings to my mind an episode which I witnessed at about noon on a hot day from the flat balcony roof of our house. A young lubra was working for my mother on this particular doing the family wash. Her man (he was not working for us) whose name was "Johnny Ugly Mug" came along and called her and ordered her to go buy him a can of sugar beer out of her wages. She objected; he became so enraged at such wifely disobedience, he seized one of her hands and with his strong teeth bit a finger off at one bite. We read of wives these modern times complaining to the courts that a husband has sworn at her; comparatively they have nothing to put up with.

When about 11 years of age I and my brother were invited by a native we had working for us to witness a fight with spears between two natives claiming the favours of a certain lubra.

No other whites were told of the meeting and we were not given an opportunity to spread the news. The day was Sunday and we were invited only a few minutes before the meeting and were taken about two miles to the sand hills, and in a hollow between two sand hills 30 or 40 natives (men only) were congregated in two separate groups. I do not know to this day whether or not the boy (about 21) who took us along to see the fight had any authority to do so; but from the fact that we had to keep out of sight and view proceedings over the top of the sand ridges, I have since thought that we had taken a risk. The fight proceeded by the two rivals facing each other at a distance, from as far as I can recollect 50 yards. Each took it in turn to aim his spear at the other who had to be skilful enough to ward it away from his body by manipulating the long narrow shield held in the left hand. The duel ended when one did not deflect the spear quickly enough and it entered his shoulder. At this stage we retired without making our presence known.

The majority of the natives seemed to be a happy go lucky lot. I came in touch with a great number of them whilst I was growing to the age of 16. It was not uncommon to be allowed to go off under their care for long trips out into the hills 5 to 10 miles from the townsite. Sometimes it would be to collect water melons and tomatoes grown wild from seed washed into the hills by flood waters of the Harding River during a Willy Willy (cyclone) when the chinese garden across the Harding from Roebourne would be washed away, dwellings and all. Or out shooting wild turkey, usually the native using the gun was clever at getting within range and a good shot. At other times we would be out with a native boy, horse and vehicle, and a couple of "sycles" (curved grass cutting hooks) when we would cut the lovely smelling clay pan grass, which always came up after rains had dried out of the natural clay pans. With the point of the sycle our boy would lift the hinged door of a "trap door spider" and get great amusement from the actions of the spider that would rush up and hang fast to the door in an endeavour to draw it closed again. On these trips the natives would always shy clear of a certain hill and warn us of the "Juna" (devil) that lived there. However, I and other lads had often gone over that same hill when not accompanied by the natives, we had never encountered the "Juna", but it was part of a favourite spot for the picking of large bunches of Sturt Pea.

My parents used to tell us of a couple of striking incidents concerning the natives of an earlier date in the history of Cossack.

The earliest settlers had made friends with the local tribe of natives and particularly friendly with their king; I have forgotten the correct name as given to us; but he was best known to the whites as King Mulligan; on one occasion when cattle was brought to Cossack in the hold of a schooner, the vessel was anchored in a channel opposite the township and King Mulligan with several of his tribe was invited aboard and duly arrived. The old King took one look into the hold, sighted the horns of the cattle, gave a mighty yell of "Juna" and dived overboard followed by his retainers and did not stop swimming until they reached the beach about a quarter of a mile away.

It is also told that on one occasion the whites were warned by King Mulligan of a feuding attack by a hostile tribe of natives, who intended to approach along the coast and would cross what we knew by the names of "Popes Nose Creek", (This is the creek now spanned by a good bridge near Point Samson). All the women of the township were moved to the Hotel billiard room and placed in charge of King Mulligan and his men, whilst all the white men went out armed to meet the hostile tribe as they crossed "Popes Nose" creek and that was the last occasion on which organised trouble was experienced at the settlement.

Before passing from this mention of the earlier settlers I think it would not be out of place to mention one name that was always held up to us young people

This particular well was still in existence 40 years later when I visited Cossack in 1938, but what a difference and what a mistake had been made by newcomers.

A young man had taken over the local hotel and had decided to connect the hotel with a direct supply from the well. He erected a tank at the top of the hill, lying between the well and hotel, connected up with pipes and power pump. He soon found that the intake of water at the bottom of the well was not fast enough to keep the pump going so he decided to deepen and get a better supply. He got a supply alright, but all his expense and effort had been wasted, it was salty and the well was spoilt for all time.

On our visit your Mother and I stayed at the hotel and all water had to be brought from Roebourne by tanker.

There was one man only at Cossack who had his own supply and that was old Harry Edney, and the newcomer at the hotel had not had the sense to ask his advice spoiling the township's supply.

I hope any young readers of this will take the lesson to heart. Never despise the experience of old age and never be too proud to seek it.

On my recent visits I have come across many instances of ignorance and mistakes in regard to local conditions etc. which could have been avoided by reference to the few "old hands" in the district. Unfortunately, for themselves, all new arrivals who came, decided they knew all about it and disdained any reference or enquiry of the old hands and in consequence the old hands soon had no time for the new and left them in ignorance which possibly was their bliss.

I found on our visit that the fact that beautiful "Cowri" shells were to be had by merely lifting the stones in the bed of Cossack creek at low tide was unknown to the residents and visitors of 1938.

The lovely "Percolem" was to be found on the bed of the ocean at Point Samson at low tide. (This percolem is the blue gem like shell eye of a certain hermit shell crab).

Turtles were to be had at low tide just for the picking up, from the shallow rock pools within walking distance of Samson township.

I visited the North again per road trip just prior to the 1939 war starting, and camped at Samson for over two months and the then residents were very surprised when I produced the items mentioned and also others.

I have not mentioned these subjects in a spirit of brag or boast, but rather that our younger generation may possibly benefit by not being tempted to the mistake of despising experience and age.

Remember you may know something from learning that your elders never found from experience, but there could be much that your elders have found from experience, which you cannot find in your books of learning.

Although cattle as well as sheep were being bred on some of the stations, they were not so plentiful or common as to be available for homestead supply of milk at Cossack.

A number of people kept a goat or two for their own supply but one family had quite a number near the old school at Cossack. This family left for the south sometime between the year 1890 and 1897 (I think it was about 1895). They could not persuade anyone to take over their flock of goats so they were driven over the marsh and into the hills between Samson and Roebourne.

From this beginning a pest grew, I spent nearly three months around Samson, Roebourne and Cossack, just prior to the last war 1939 and on a one day jaunt through a section of the hills, I encountered three separate flocks, with possibly about 100 head in each.

About 100 yards from the one herd, I crept unawares upon a nanny and two young kids, the mother was busy trying to get the last leaves from a wild wattle. I seized the kids and they naturally set up a combined chorus, the mother took to her heels and joined the main herd. On glancing up I found that a huge Billy had detached

himself from the herd and was charging in my direction. I naturally dropped the kids and using a 310 rifle fired at the head of the charging animal, and so far as I could judge hit him on the head or possibly a horn; with a violent shake of his head he stopped sudden, and then turned tailback to his flock, needless to say the kids had also disappeared.

At the age of 9 years our eldest brother Harry was sent to relatives in the north of England to be given a good deucation. He was put on board a steamer for Singapore in charge of the stewardess, to be passed on there to others, until he reached England, where he was placed on a train for the north with a label attached to his button-hole, our uncle met the train on its arrival and recognised him from his label.

Brother Harry was duly placed in a school and between learning lessons and soccer football he apparently got into a lot of mischief and had to leave school and was apprenticed to the cabinet making trade.

Father decided he had better go after him to see what was doing, so after more than thirty years absence he went home for a trip and brought Harry back with him. Harry had not finished his full time at the trade but completed it some years later at Fremantle.

Looking south east from Cossack, an outstanding Rock Island can be seen, it was called De-Puch Island.

I can recall and visualise the excitement amongst the inhabitants of Cossack and Roebourne when early one morning it was reported that one of our largest coastal trading steamers, the "Eddystone" had run right into the island and was a total wreck. With the aid of field glasses the wreck was plainly visible from Cossack.

A Mr. Rouse bought the salvage and removed all the movable furniture etc. and for many months the sale of the various articles of furniture created a lot of interest.

The Mr. Rouse referred to was the same man who invented a great improvement to the diving suit then in use and enabled the divers to explore for shell at greater depths.

As time passed the "Stations" as we called them, produced more and more wool.

The wool clip was mostly shipped through Cossack and was transported to the township in very large four wheeled waggons (a sample of which I do not expect could be found anywhere in this State today).

The waggons were mostly drawn by about 20 bullocks yoked in pairs, also a number of horse drawn waggon loads came in and it was a grand sight to see the long line of bullocks or horses drawing an immense waggon loaded high and well over the side rails with bales of wool.

The wool was stacked in orderly manner on the space near the jetty, several bales high, and was a great attraction for us boys as a playground. Some of the wool was stored in the long storeroom of the North West Mercantile Co. over the road from the jetty, and put through the presser which compressed it into bales half the size of those not so treated.

On arrival of a steamer, or as in the earlier period a sailing ship, to take the wool away it was loaded into lighters and then taken out to the ships which would be anchored outside Jarman Island.

Before the advent of the steam lighters "Beagle" and "Croydon", all cargo for Cossack etc. was brought in by sailing lighters from the steamers outside, and was discharged on to Cossack jetty by means which in comparison with present day methods would be considered rather unusual.

The Mercantile Store owned a heavy draught horse called "Boxer" and for many years he was a familiar sight at the unloading.

Hitched to a long rope passing through pully blocks attached to the ships derek (or boom as we knew it) and the other end of the rope hooked on to the sling of cargo, the driver would give the word and old Boxer would set off at a brisk pace and when the sling was up high enough to be landed on the jetty the word was given and old

Boxer would stop, the hitched rope would be released and Boxer would retrace his steps for the next sling full.

As mentioned earlier in this narrative, goats were the main source of milk supply before cows were plentiful. At one stage we had a small mixed herd of about 8 goats and it was the duty of the elder children to get them in and do the milking each evening. The goats found their best pasture during the day, which was on and around a hill we knew as "look-out" hill about a mile away.

We owned a big brown crossbred dog which after a few trips with us to bring the goats in, had only to be told to "get the goats" and away he went, rounded them up and had them home quick and lively.

Owing mainly to scarcity of water very few vegetables were grown at Cossack and no fruit.

Some Chinese had a garden across the Harding River from Roebourne and part of the year they would come to Cossack with supplies and had no trouble in disposing of all they grew.

When vegetables were not available, we used a wild weed for green salads, we knew it as "Mary-Ann". This seems to be the same weed which is plentiful here down south and grows prolific in summer and belongs to the "pig-face" family; but unlike the ordinary "pig-face" it has a small flat leaf and oval shape.

Another wild vegetable we had was the "Nalgo" which was about the size of a three pence piece and something like a small onion. It grew under the soil at the end of a thin strong grassy stem, in fact I would not be surprised if it proved to be identical with the Guildford grass or sourgrass weed as we know it here.

We also used quite a lot of sea foods such as "oysters" and "perriwinkles" "cockles", fish and two varieties of crabs. The ordinary "Blue Manna" and the huge mangrove crab or as we knew it by the native name "Tariblecrab". Someone had introduced the "Prickly Pear" to the district and several large patches were thriving at Cossack and many kerosene tins of the lovely pears we have picked and eaten, sometimes in pies, sometimes as jam, and plenty raw, they were about the size and shape of a hen egg and had groups of prickles at intervals spacing over the outside skin. We handled the pears, in old newspaper and rubbed the prickles off. All the plants have since been destroyed as a noxious pest plant.

There is much that could be written of the happenings and memories of Cossack but I will pass on over a period to the time of my leaving school and starting work.

My first job was loading gravel from the pit just beyond "Nanny Goat" hill and delivering it to customers in a heavy dray drawn by a heavy draught horse and also delivering firewood to the Chinese baker and others around Cossack. The firewood had been cut into 4 foot lengths high up Cossack Creek, by natives and transported in a flat bottom punt, to the Sandy beach not far from our house, where it was stacked in neat lines and sold by the cord which measured 8' long x 4' high and 4" wide and so far as I can recall the price was 10/-.

After a couple of months at this work I got a job working in a store, which had been recently started by two men lately arrived from the south and it was next door to the premises we previously ran as a boarding house and the premises they started in was that previously used by the Chinese who had been the victim of the Malays in the incident recorded earlier.

I am not sure how long the store kept going but it was a failure and the firm went bankrupt, owing me about two months wages which I have not received to this day.

After the closure of this shop, I received a job with a Mr. Tee who was a partner of Messrs. Watson and Tee, storekeepers of Roebourne, the Cossack business being a branch of the firm. Mr. Tee also had a shipping agency and was the assayer for the mines and many an hour I spent with the "pestle" and "mortar" crushing samples of gold and copper ore for assay.

My duties also included serving any customers and making up orders at the store which was situated about 50 yards behind the shipping offices and when the steamers of the agency arrived outside Jarman Island my employer had to meet them and

transact all business in connection with their cargo and clearance and I was usually left in sole charge of the office sometimes for two days; and when the cargo was being landed by the lighter, our office was very busy for a few days. It was during these busy times after the arrival of the steamers cargoes that I learnt much which stood me in good stead later.

An old accountant named Mr. Paterson came into the office to work as soon as the ships manifests were available and he taught me short cuts to quick calculations of freight and charges accounts and as consignees were always in a hurry to get the goods away mostly to Roebourne and the interior north and south I had to acquire speed.

Mr. Paterson was a tall well built man with a long and wide bushy black beard and mention of him has brought to my recollection an incident of the days when I could not have been more than 5 years old, as it was just prior to our removal to the new house I have recorded earlier in this narrative. Mr. & Mrs. Paterson had gone off on a trip somewhere; during their absence my eldest brother and others including myself had entered and removed pewter ware, tea pots, etc, well we got into plenty of trouble which we undoubtedly deserved. However, Mr. Paterson was a fine old gentleman.

As mentioned earlier a "Blow" or Willy Willy" occurred in 1898 and the two bridges spanning the tidal creeks on the road to Roebourne were washed away. A temporary track had to be made on a long detour to avoid the creeks and as it was across portion of the marsh it could not have been traversed by vehicles or horses except at neap tides when the sea did not cover the marsh. The Union Bank had closed its office at Cossack (the pearling had also gone by this time), and I was entrusted with the store and freight takings each Saturday morning and rode my bicycle to Roebourne and return. I regret to say I do not think it would be safe to do the same today without an escort.

My employer, Mr. Geo. Alexander Tee was a fine chap and a great friend of the young people. He was an Englishman of about 30 or 35 years of age and gave a lot of time to organising entertainment for the young and old, dances and concerts were his speciality and I recall the interest he took in our 5th November celebrations. He would manufacture a big supply of fireworks large and small and also secure ships rockets etc, plus a good supply of empty packing cases for the bonfire and at night supervise the distribution and discharge of the fireworks.

I have never forgotten the scare we had after the last bonfire we had on the hill behind Cossack township. During the night within an hour after we had left the scene, Harry Bartlett's cottage situated about 50 yards below the scene of our celebrations caught alight and was burnt to the ground. We were considered the cause for a time but it was subsequently found that Mr. Bartlett had left his oil stove burning when he went on duty as nightwatchman to the wharf.

Mr. Tee was the first to introduce the gramophone to the north and I can assure you he was never short of an audience to hear the marvel of song and music coming from a machine.

Mr. Tee left the north to return to London where he became a stockbroker and we were very pleased to get a letter from him. Whilst in the north he always dressed well and kept himself well groomed and I think the whole township missed his immaculate white dressed figure. He resided at the "White Horse" hotel and was a bachelor. The business was carried on by Mr. Harding and I worked for him until I left the north in 1901.

Indicative of the importance of Roebourne and Cossack as the distributing centre for the north west, the government of the day pushed ahead with the erection of new and substantial public buildings. At Cossack an up to date custom house and bond stores plus living quarters, to which the Collector of Custom (Mr. Ottney) moved with his staff from the basement of the Post Office, which was remodelled and improved. A new courthouse of several large rooms and imposing design, with ornate verandah supported by imposing concrete pillars with square sections 2' diameter, new police quarters, etc.

These new buildings were from the local ironstone quarried from the red and blue construction of the hills at the entrance to Cossack Creek or harbour and they with the new school are the only ones that have withstood the ravage of time and blows; they are there to this day.

The buildings to the best of my recollection were erected between the years 1892 and 1896 and were in use for a very short period until the advent of Federation and the loss of the pearling industry closed them.

About the years 1898-1900 a move was on foot to open up Point Samson to replace Cossack, as it was claimed that it was a safer shelter from blows and steamers could come alongside any jetty built there and remain afloat even at low tide.

Before we left Cossack in 1901 a jetty had been constructed at Point Samson, and also before we left had been so badly damaged that all cargo had to continue through Cossack and it was not until later that a more substantial jetty was constructed and all shipping business left Cossack, but I understand a subsequent blow did a lot of damage and destroyed the railway line and bridge over Popes Nose Creek and the business had to come again through Cossack. Later Samson was reconstructed, but the train line was not replaced.

Pests and reptiles were never so very much trouble at Cossack in our time, I think the worst was the large brown cockroach which I understand was introduced by schooners and luggers from other ports. The roach became so bad on some of the vessels that they would be sunk in Cossack Creek for a couple of tides and before being re-floated the crew would clear the escapees from the rigging and masts.

In the home these pests would usually come out at night and swarm on the ceiling of one room in such numbers that when they started to fly their wings created a loud buzzinf sound, and was always referred to as the Cockroach "Corroboree" and did they smell if crushed; our present day black house cockroach could be described as sweet little things in comparison.

The other main reptile was the snake. The sea snake we treated with contempt, it was a common occurrence to have the yellow and black banded variety swim past in close proximity whilst bathing in the clear transparent fast running creek, and often we came upon them curled up in the branches of a mangrove tree, sometimes we would give them a crack with the oar, but usually we passed them by. We always understood that they were not poisonous but our present day generation of so called experts warn that they are very deadly.

The land snake was treated with more respect, and I recall that should one be sighted near the house and escape under the floor or stone walls in the morning, we children were set to watch about midday, and sure enough the snake emerged and Father despatched it with a waddy.

On more than one occasion housewives had unpleasant experiences with snakes which would if given a chance enter the house to escape the outside heat.

My Mother had one such experience in our first home. Opening the crockery cupboard door she was confronted with one curled up in a soup plate; soup plates were much larger than our present day article.

There is much more that could be recalled of events and happenings at Cossack before it began to slide back about the year 1900 or possibly a little earlier, but I think I have written enough to occupy the attention of my readers and possible more than enough for some. I will therefore place on record the closing events leading up to our departure.

In the latter half of 1900 our house and contents were destroyed by fire, all that was saved was a galah in its cage which had been hanging under the front verandah. We were given the use of Martin's house which had been left vacant since the departure of the owner a few months before, after closing his butchering business.

My Mother, with the four girls and young Syd were sent down to Fremantle and early in 1900 my Father with Harry and myself boarded the lighter "Beagle" on the spring tide to go outside Jarman Island and await the arrival of the steamer "Australind". We waited in rough seas until near midnight, but the "Australind" had not put in an appearance; so the "Beagle" ran for Point Samson and shelter at the damaged jetty and as there was no sign of the "Australind" at daybreak we returned to the jetty at Cossack to find out what had happened. However, the steamer was sighted from Look-out Hill about noon but we could not get out of the creek until the tide had risen higher at 4 p.m.

We called in at Onslow and Carnarvon but did not think much of either place as they were smaller even than Cossack. However, we opened our eyes at Geraldton. Brother Harry had seen some better places but for my part it was the first time I had seen a dressed shop window, or a display of fruit. I have not forgotten to this day, the large display of grapes and all fruits in season, plus bananas, cocoanuts, pomelos and mangostems from Singapore, in the window of Silbert and Sharpe shop window.

Prior to this I had not seen any fruit apart from that dropped in at Cossack by the Singapore boats, and very few grapes which used to arrive from the south packed in sawdust and all loose from the bunches.

We landed at the old wooden jetty near what is now the fishmarket at Fremantle and Fremantle even in those days looked a magnificent place after our Nor-west home.

However, I soon yearned to be back to the old place again; and Mr. Charles Moore who was managing the Mercantile Store at Cossack for W.V. Moore & Co. wired down offering me a job at one pound per week and I was eager to accept but my parents would not consent.

Brother Andy remained at Cossack as Assistant Post & Telegraph Clerk and was transferred to Fremantle Railway Post Office.

I will outline briefly my subsequent movements before seeing Cossack again. For seven months I worked with an Englishman, new arrival in a furniture factory; then about six months with Dalgety and Co., where their main and head office was in Dalgety Street, Fremantle. I was one of several juniors and received 10/- weekly as a special concession owing to my previous job with office at Cossack that held their agency. All the other boys had to work 3 (three) months without wages as it was considered a privilege in those days to get a chance to work at Dalgety's. All correspondence was hand written by each head of department, using a special copying ink and my main duties consisted of sweeping and cleaning the office of the manager, Mr. Leeds, copying letters into the letter book by damping and pressure under the vice like press, and attending to the mail, and usually had to come back after tea to work, when we were allowed 9d. for tea money.

I was offered a job by Mr. H.J. Wigmore, who at that time had a small office in Cliff Street, I accepted this and got along very well. I received £1 weekly and was soon assisting with the firm's shipping and agency department.

Later, I had a good offer from Mr. Thos. Ockerby only a few doors from Wigmore's and with the exception of about 12 months was with him until late 1915, when I left to recuperate my health. In the interim passage of years the business had grown and owned several Flour Mills and many agencies and I had passed my accountancy exams with the Victorian Institute and was at one stage supervising the work of some 60 employees whilst secretary and accountant. The War was on and I enlisted, passing the test much to the surprise of my friends and relatives.

I returned from overseas in May 1919, dead broke.

I forgot to mention I married Miss Nellie Down at High Street East Methodist Church, 8th December, 1908. Len was born December 1909 and before I left for overseas in World War I Eulalie, Ron and Ray were also born and my wife was left to care for them on her own, which was no small achievement on the soldier's pay of 5/- per day and small allowance for children.

On my return things were bad so far as employment was concerned and having a desire for a more open and free life than that of an office I borrowed £40 from my old friend Mr. H.J. Wigmore and started in business at Swanbourne, but had to sell owing to recurrence of sickness I had had whilst away. However, after 12 months or so I again started in the storekeeping business at Victoria Park and subsequently at South Perth.

I omitted to record that after my arrival in Fremantle in 1901, I with my two elder brothers joined the Fremantle Volunteers. I put my age on to 18 years and was accepted, the Boer War was on and I had ideas of going, which was the idea of volunteers training. However, the war ended before I was 21, but we took part in the reception to the Duke and Duchess who later became King and Queen. We provided the guard of honour on Fremantle new wharf and also lined the streets in Perth in our red coats, white helmets, navy blue trousers, etc.

I did not see Cossack again until 1938, when owing to a nervous breakdown my wife and I took a trip by the S.S. "Kalama" and stayed for about a fortnight at the hotel at Cossack, which was made up of the combination of the two old hotels the "Weld" and "White Horse". I was unable to get about much owing to the heat but resolved to come again. What a change had taken place since we had left 38 years previously.

The remaining houses did not exceed one dozen, government buildings included. The following year, I, with son Ron, and a Mr. Jones of about my own age went by road (all bush track from Northampton onwards) in an old out of date Auburn car. The trip up took eight days. My two companions came back by boat after about four weeks stay but I remained for several weeks longer, camping in a little cottage at Samson and renewed my acquaintance with the old spots of my boyhood. I sold the car and returned by boat just before the second World War broke out. I still have mementos gathered on that trip.

Last year, Ron and two of his relatives arranged a trip with Cossack as the destination and I was offered a seat in the car.

It was then 55 years since I had first left Cossack and what a change.

Every stick of timber or building that could be demolished had gone and even the iron roofs of some of the government stone buildings had been removed. Even the two bridges spanning the creeks on the road to Roebourne had gone and in their place the Americans during the war had filled in with stones to a height of at least 15 feet to span both creeks.

The roads to Roebourne had been made and parts bituminised so that our trip on this occasion was almost as good as travelling around the metropolitan area but it was too short for me as with a stay at Cossack and Samson of three days only we were back home within 12 days.

Recorded by Mr. Chris Thompson.

* Mrs M. Fernie (née Thompson) who gave these reminiscences to Mrs Lucy Anderson has a daughter:

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and a cousin Mrs Mavis Salter
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Trigg

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These two members of the family have additional material —